

Steve Ballmer
CEO Microsoft Corporation

Steve,

The current 520 bridge is unsafe and its congestion is a serious regional problem. I believe the thousands of Microsoft employees who spend far too much time away from their families stalled on that bridge deserve better.

The proposed A+ 520 bridge replacement plan will delay replacement given its divisiveness, likelihood for a lawsuit, and failure to address the reality of climate change.

The Coalition for a Sustainable 520, House Speaker Frank Chopp (D-43), Senator Ed Murray (D-43), Representative Jamie Pedersen (D-43), Seattle Councilmembers Nick Licata and Mike O'Brien, the Sierra Club, the Cascade Bicycle Club and I support a 520 bridge replacement that maintains its current auto-capacity and features light rail from the start. We are encouraged by a recent poll showing that 69 percent of those living in affected Seattle neighborhoods and 71 percent of those living in affected Eastside neighborhoods support light rail across the 520 bridge.

Bill Gates demonstrated tremendous leadership in addressing climate change during his speech at the recent TED Conference:

"Until we get near to zero [carbon emissions] the temperature will continue to rise. That's a big challenge. It's very different from saying we're a 12-foot high truck trying to get under a 10-foot bridge and we can sort of just squeeze under. This is something that has to get to zero...

We have to go from rapidly rising, to falling and falling all the way to zero."

I appreciate your efforts to inform Microsoft employees of this issue and encouraging them to participate in the discussion over how to build the best replacement of the 520 bridge. In that spirit, I would ask that you share my response below with your employees as well. I would also welcome the opportunity to discuss this important project in a town hall with you and fellow Microsoft employees on your campus in Redmond.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mike McGinn

Dear Microsoft Team Members:

We support a regional transportation option that better serves employees of Microsoft and other commuters, who contribute so much to our city and region. Our concerns relating to the SR 520 project have to do with creating a project that will support a more socially just, environmentally sound solution that addresses neighborhood concerns. This is why we do not support the "A+" option for the Montlake interchange.

Social Justice concerns:

The current preferred option (A+) does not adequately support people of lower income. With this option, if you have enough money for a car, to pay the toll to cross the bridge, and to pay for parking when you're done with this plan, then this is the plan for you. We support mass transit as part of this project (above and beyond the current bus service), in the form of light rail and bus rapid transit.

Environmental concerns:

Though we currently have a state law that requires us to consider VMT (vehicle miles traveled) and our goal is to reduce vehicle miles traveled, this project will increase the number of vehicle miles traveled. Yesterday (2/22/2010) the City Council announced its legislative priorities for 2010. Climate neutrality (or, becoming a "carbon neutral city" with zero greenhouse gas emissions) was a major announcement. However, if we continue to design highway megaprojects that increase automobile capacity and do not promote mass transit, this goal will simply not be reached.

Neighborhood concerns:

Protecting the Arboretum, which is an impressive regional resource, is of great importance. Traffic that may overwhelm the neighborhoods is also a negative effect of option A+, as it includes off-ramps that will increase traffic. Additionally, the A+ option does not allow for efficient connections to transit.

Thanks again for your comments.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mike McGinn